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ABSTRACT

In the first half of the 20th century, the social functions of the indigenous languages in Chukotka, in northeast Asia, increased due to the development of written languages, local press, and broadcasting on radio and television. From 1933 to 1989, the local press of indigenous peoples in Chukotka was used for Communist Party propaganda. However, it also improved the indigenous peoples' lives and the development of educational institutions. The local press in Chukotka, published only in the Chukchi language until 1989, was an important forum for maintaining the social functions of indigenous languages. In the 1950s, language assimilation increased because of the language policy and influence of the Russian majority. Indigenous children had to attend boarding schools and were educated in the Russian language. Now the oral traditions are being lost because indigenous families speak mostly Russian and because Native languages are losing their function as transmitters of indigenous culture. The recognition of that loss by indigenous people caused them to found local cultural societies whose aim was to preserve indigenous languages. In the early 1990s, the Murgin Nutenut newspaper was published in three indigenous languages and Russian by a group of Native journalists and writers whose goal was saving their traditional culture and language. Now the paper is a supplement to a Russian newspaper and publishes material in two indigenous languages twice a month. (TD)

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The Languages of Indigenous Peoples in Chukotka and the Media

Galina Diatchkova

This paper examines the history of the development of indigenous people's media in Chukotka. I draw attention to the changes that have occurred with the Native newspaper and the reasons for those changes. I suggest that the newspaper has broadened the social functions of the indigenous languages of the area. I will show how the newspaper interacts with the educational and social organizations, whose purpose is to develop and save indigenous languages, and how it has built up a sense of our language's worth. In this paper, I use the regional newspapers *Sovetskaya Chukotka, Sovetken Chukotka, Murgin Nutenut*, and *Krainy Sever* from 1933 until 2000.

Chukotka is situated in northeastern Asia. In this region, there are such indigenous peoples as the Chukchi (Lauravetlans), Eskimos (Yupik), Kereks, Koryaks, Yukagirs, and Chuvans. The traditional occupations of the indigenous people are intensive reindeer breeding, sea mammal hunting, fishing, and hunting. There are approximately 87,000 people in the region, including 15,000 indigenous people. Of the 15,000, 12,995 are Chukchi (in 1989, 15,184), 1,514 are Yupik (in 1989, 1,719), 113 are Yukagirs (in 1989, 160), 1,155 are Evens (1,336 in 1989), and fewer than 50 are Kereks.

In the first half of the twentieth century, preservation of the indigenous languages of Chukotka was not a problem. The homogeneous ethnic environment, traditional occupations, and the transmission of oral folklore from generation to generation promoted the preservation of indigenous languages. However, the culture of the indigenous languages suffered after the establishment of Soviet power, when Russian culture and the Russian language were promoted as the main objects in the new Soviet society.[3]

At the same time, beginning in the 1930s, the social functions of indigenous languages had broadened due to the development of alphabets, the appearance of the written languages, the rise of the press, and education in indigenous languages in the Chukotka schools in the first part of this century. According to V. Bogoras' research, Chukchi originally had a pictography, which recorded hunting scenes on wooden boards and walrus bones. In 1931, Chukchi Tenevil created the first alphabet, and his Native group used that system.

The first published work in indigenous languages appeared in the nineteenth century because of missionary work. In 1881 and 1894, some texts in Chukchi were published in the Cyrillic alphabet. *Tungus Vocabulary with Prayers* was prepared by S. Popov for Evens in 1858. And in the next year, A. Shiphner produced a grammar of the Evens language. To our knowledge, the core investigations in the indigenous languages were made by V. Bogoras and S. Stebnitsky and later by I. Vdovin, P. Skorik, G. Menovchikov, E. Rubtsova, K. Novikova, and others. This period saw the formation of a literary tradition in the indigenous languages of Chukchi (Lauravetlan), Eskimo (Yupik), and Evens. The dialects of these languages and the phonological and phonetic rules were

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determined. The orthography was also developed. The committee on the creation of the new alphabets was situated in the village of Uelen and had its own organ of the press in the publication of the *Lenin Ret* (Chukchi, Lenin Way). Ultimately, written Chukchi was modified for the dialect of the coastal citizens. The first ABC book was *Celgi Kalekal* (Chukchi, Red book) by V. Bogoras, issued in 1932.

After the establishment of Soviet power in Chukotka, the Communists used the public media heavily; at first, they used the newspaper. During the Soviet period, the first printed contributions in the Chukchi language appeared in 1933 in the village Anadyr. Chukchi was the language of communication among all indigenous peoples at that time. The name of the newspaper was *Sovetskaya Chukotka* (Soviet Chukotka), and the circulation was between 700 and 1,000, five times a week.[2] Until 1953, readers could find political information printed in Chukchi in two or three articles, which took up about half a page in total. From 1932 until 1937, written Chukchi used the Roman alphabet in newspaper and literature, but it later switched to Cyrillic. Newspaper articles were published in Chukchi using the newly created alphabet. The subject matter of the first newspapers included the activities of national organizations and women's organizations. Common themes of the times included the struggle against shamans and the bourgeoisie (*Sovetskaya Chukotka* - SC, 1930s).

Apparently, the need to distribute the newspaper and to increase its circulation caused the communists to give subscriptions even to children's organizations. There were many subscription campaigns in which, for example, the pioneers from the village Ust'-Belaya challenged the pioneers from the villages Markovo and Anadyr to see who could get the most adults to subscribe (SC, May 18,1936). Newspapers were posted on public walls in order to distribute information to more people. According to Arishin's report (SC, May 5, 1936), 23 wall newspapers existed in Chukotka: 10 in the Chukchi language, 5 in Eskimo, and 8 in Russian.

Reading and writing were introduced in the 1930s in a campaign to abolish illiteracy. One can read in newspaper SC from May 5, 1936 that the Chukchi and Eskimo (village of Nutepelmino) Levutein, Ekanto, Ainal, Kavak, and Yulak pledge themselves to abolish illiteracy by 1936-37. Advanced schools were announced in Naukan, Yanrakinnot, Sireniki, Enmelen, Uelkal, and Shelagsky.

The newspaper became popular among indigenous people possibly because there were reports like the ones from Tegrinkeu and Taiu (SC, May, 18,1936): Chukchi and Eskimos are interested in the newspaper SC. At the time, Russian was the official bureaucratic language. However, the indigenous people did not understand Russian. So that is why there were reports that demanded that all papers write in the Chukchi and Eskimo languages.

Let us discuss the structure of indigenous languages in the period of the establishment of Soviet power. Political vocabulary like *republic, kolhoz, bolshevik, party*, and *numeral* appeared in indigenous language articles, but these words were in Russian. To my mind, these new words were not understood and recognized by Chukchi because, as V. Bogoras had pointed out, Chukchi did not

like to use foreign words; they tried to compose their own words for new objects. For example, the Chukchi created their own names for new objects such as watches, planes, and so forth.

In the early 1950s, a national newspaper *Sovetken Chukotka* (Ch.SC) in the Chukchi language appeared as the official organ of the Chukotka Regional Committee of the Communist Party URSS and the Regional Body of Worker's Deputies. Although the newspaper was only a translation of the original Russian one, it is necessary to discuss the implications of indigenous people being exposed to print media. The first issue was on May 1, 1953 (three times a week, circulation: 1250).

Originally, all of four pages were in the Chukchi language. This issue informed people that ten graduates from Anadyr Pedagogical College would be working in the village school; among them were M. Einelkut from Khatyrka (Chukchi) and N. Rukaktak from Chaplino (Eskimo). The next article was about students from the Pedagogical Institute in Leningrad; they were Y. Rytkheu, Koravie, and Kergav.

According to the report of S. Goryachkin, the chief of the Department of Education in Chukotka (SC, January 5, 1953), in the times of the Tzars, there were only three schools and only 38 Chukchi and Eskimo could get an education. In contrast, in Soviet times, there were 63 schools in 1952-1954. In 1953 in Chukotka, there were 33 boarding schools and 1,219 pupils. In Anadyr Pedagogical College, there were 129 students, among them 74 Chukchi, 21 Eskimos, 12 Evens, and others. There were 12 evening schools for 736 adults and 10 kindergarten classes. In one of the issues of the newspapers, one could read that the Eskimos Kinok (village Sireniki), Yomron (Naukan), Chukchis Kaletegin (Ostrovnoye), and Rochgina (Schmidt) were the best in education. The Kinok informed people that, in their village, there was a school with visual aids, copy-books, and pens, but there were not enough textbooks. Pupils would study the Eskimo and Chukchi languages in the First Form. In addition to a school, the village had a library, a store, a radio, and electricity.

From the 1930s through to the 1950s, the Communist party employed the Cultural Army (kul'tarmeytsy), who were literate people whose job it was to educate the illiterate. One of the newspaper writers, Rultyneut, informed readers that all members of the Cultural Army had met their commitments to educate up to the Seventh Form in the school in the village of Tavayvaam. In this village, nine members of the Cultural Army had educated 48 individual people (Ch.SC, June 15,1953).

Another writer, Penevie, informed readers that the students of Anadyr Pedagogical College had taken an examination (Ch.SC, June 15,1953). It was typical for the times that students wrote exams in the Chukchi and Eskimo languages. The main examination was in dictation. The students also had to do practicum teaching. For example, Kayo, a student, conducted a lesson on reading in the Chukchi language in the First Form. He used visual aids. At the same time, he explained for people the new Communist Party resolutions (SC, March 3, 1950). The writer N. Roltytval (SC, February 5, 1950) informed readers that

85% of indigenous people in Chukotka were literate and that, in a few years, illiteracy would be abolished. There were 76 schools, one pedagogical college, the Institution for Kolkhoz workers, 65 clubs, and more than 10 libraries and Red Yarangs in Chukotka. It was mentioned that, in 1939, the mostly nomadic people like the Chukchi lived in Yarangas (Chukchi dwelling) and that, in 1950, 80% of the population lived in wooden houses. On the whole, the main subjects of newspaper contributions in the 1950s were about the building of schools and houses, reindeer herding, and Communist Party resolutions.

In the 1950s, the people in villages could listen to the radio. In the written form of the Native languages, one could read many of the loan words from Russian like *percent, ruble, plan, cash-desk, quarter*, and others. The first TV programs aired in 1967 in the town of Anadyr, the capital of Chukotka. One of the Native announcers was a Chukchi woman, E. Guv'ekvine. Now there are some programs in the Chukchi language on TV like Eigiskin (Our Land) News. These programs tell about the culture of indigenous peoples. Radio broadcasts are conducted in the Chukchi and Eskimo languages five times a week, approximately one hour per day.

In the 1950s, the changes in social and economic conditions led to a change in demographics so that the majority were now of Russian origin. There was also increased building of mines and villages. Changes in the social and professional structure of the indigenous people and new directions in language policy had an effect on the indigenous languages. At the end of the 1950s,[4] the focus in public education changed so that education was conducted entirely in the Russian language. The Native languages were studied simply as subjects or were abolished. Indigenous children had to go to boarding schools; their education was in Russian culture (literature, art, history) and Russian language. Such education changed the consciousness of indigenous peoples. These children forgot the traditions of their people and did not want to share in the affairs of their ancestors such as reindeer herding or sea mammal hunting. The indigenous cultures suffered great losses.

The change in language policy had grave consequences. In 1992, only 69 of 176 educators teaching kindergarten spoke in Native languages, and only 26 of those educated the children in Native languages. There is no education on the subject of Native languages in many kindergarten classes according to a Methodist from one educational institution in Anadyr (*Murgin Nutenut* – MN, November 28, 1992). The number of the teachers of Native languages has decreased from 81 in 1991 to 38 in 1998. A spot check of the pupils' writing in 1999 showed that only 16 children out of 147 spoke Native languages fluently; 74 pupils had listening comprehension, but could not speak their Native language; and 57 pupils absolutely could not speak in Native languages (*Krainy Sever* – KS, December 17, 1999).

Like St Petersburg State Pedagogical University, Anadyr Pedagogical College—as the main institution that prepares teachers for Native schools—turns out fewer teachers of Native languages from year to year. The percentage of indigenous peoples' representatives among students in the college is very

low. One teacher at the college, Irina G. Girgolnaut, said that students are speaking Native languages poorly (MN, October 24, 1992). Now there is a lack of teachers for many subjects in the Native (indigenous) schools in Chukotka. Some schools are closed, and some have transferred from secondary to become primary schools. In order to receive a secondary education these days, many indigenous people have to leave their own villages (KS 1990s). This letter was written by one Chukchi woman for a newspaper: "I can't imagine how I could leave my house, my work, my village, river, mountains, which have helped me in my life" (KS, June 22, 1996). She, like many of residents of Native villages, had to leave her home in order to give her child access to education.

In 1999, the Pedagogical College celebrated the 60th anniversary of its founding in 1939. For the period 1939 to 1999, 2,517 students have graduated from the College as teachers of indigenous languages, of Russian, of physical culture, of labour education, and also as tutors for kindergarten students (KS, October 1, 1999). But on whole, the system of education in the region of Chukotka did not solve the problem of preserving the indigenous languages. For the past 70 years of Soviet and post-Soviet education, there have been textbooks in Native languages mostly for the primary school; for the secondary school, there are only programs.

From one decade to another, the number of people with knowledge of their Native language has decreased, and the indigenous people with knowledge of only the Russian language as a first language has increased. This is owing to the assimilation of indigenous peoples to the language and culture of the Russian majority and due to the decreasing social functions of indigenous languages. According to the census of 1979, 19.4% of Chukchi considered the Russian language their mother tongue, as compared to 27.2% in 1989. In 1979, 38.3% of Eskimos considered Russian their mother tongue, and in 1989 that number rose to 43.7%. In 1979, 25.1% of Evens were Russian mother tongue speakers; that figure was 32.7% in 1989.[5] This language assimilation is increasing this decade.

It is important to mention that information about some indigenous problems has been made public through newspapers written by indigenous people. Before January 1, 1989, the Native newspaper *Sovetken Chukotka* was only a translation of the Russian *Soviet Chukotka*. Owing to democratization in the Soviet Union, the indigenous people have experienced newfound enthusiasm. People have made an effort to change the status of the Native newspaper. Beginning in 1989, it became an original Native-language newspaper. This newspaper, with the Chukchi name *Murgin Nutenut* (Our Land) was issued on July 7, 1990. *Murgin Nutenut* was a weekly newspaper with a circulation of approximately 690. In every issue of this newspaper during the first part of 1990s, one could read words of gladness concerning the existence of the original Native newspaper. One woman wrote: "We have to remember that the national pride is to know the Native language and customs" (MN, June 4, 1994). This newspaper was popular not only in Chukotka, but also in the Republic of Yakutia. One reader, Christofor Dutkin from Yakutia, wrote that, "I think, in any case, the newspaper of indigenous peoples has to exist. Thanks to such a newspaper, we learn about language,

culture, and life. The newspaper is the eyes, ears, and consciousness of the people" (MN, May 32, 1992).

The first pages of our indigenous newspaper were in the Chukchi language. From1989 on, the people could read two pages in the Eskimo language,[6] and starting in 1990, one page was in the Evens language. This interesting newspaper reflected the social, cultural, economic, and political life of indigenous peoples in Chukotka. It was a time of indigenous peoples' enthusiasm despite the poor economic situation. In 1990, the Chukotka Association of Indigenous Peoples was organized. In addition, several cultural societies appeared whose purpose was to save the Native languages. These societies included one in my native town Anadyr—Cicetkin Wetgaw (Lauravetlan language, Native Word), one in Eek (Lauravetlan, Light), one in the Providenia district Akhtagak (Yupik), and so on.

But the most dramatic episode happened with the Native newspaper *Murgin Nutenut* in the middle of the 1990s. By a resolution of the governor of Chukotka (A. Nazarov, the first governor to be Russian by origin), the indigenous newspaper was transferred as a supplement to the Russian newspaper *Krainy Sever*.[7] To counter this resolution, we organized a strike committee to save our newspaper. The governor had promised to support the newspaper, but he did not keep his word. Since 1996, *Murgin Nutenut* has been a supplement of the Russian newspaper. Now MN appears twice a month on two pages, mostly in the Chukchi and Evens languages. The social and economic situation of indigenous peoples is critical. Also, in the Russian newspaper *Krainy Sever*, one can read that the indigenous peoples' standard of living is very low. In spite of this, sometimes we repeat the words of one writer: We have to survive.

In conclusion, in the twentieth century, the social functions of the indigenous languages in Chukotka have increased owing to the development of written languages, local press, and broadcasting on radio and on TV.[8] At the same time, language assimilation is increasing because of the language policy and the influence of the Russian majority. The indigenous children are communicating and are educated in the Russian language. The number of indigenous people who consider Russian to be their native language is increasing. Now we have to say that the oral folklore traditions are being lost because, in the family, people are mostly speaking Russian and because Native languages are losing their function as the transmitters of indigenous culture.

The recognition of that loss by indigenous people caused them to found local cultural societies. The first aim of those societies is to preserve the indigenous languages.

The current language situation in Chukotka is typical for all small indigenous populations in Russia, as one can see from a back issue of the Russian newspaper in Chukotka *Krainy Sever* from December 17, 1999. Here is the relevant information:

- 17% of Aboriginals in Russia do not have primary education.
- There is cultural, linguistic, and educational degradation among indigenous peoples due to the destructive policies of the Russians.

From 1933 to 1989, the local press of indigenous peoples in Chukotka was used for Communist Party propaganda. However, it also improved the indigenous peoples' lives and the development of education institutions.

The local press in Chukotka, published only in the Chukchi language until January 1,1989, is an important forum for maintaining the social functions of indigenous languages. It is one of the primary ways of preserving the languages. The Native newspaper *Sovetken Chukotka*, later *Murgin Nutenut*, demonstrated the importance of educational and social organizations to the solving this problem. One can observe this importance in contributions to *Murgin Nutenut* in the first part of the 1990s. *Murgin Nutenut* of that period was the result of the collaborative efforts of a group of Native journalists and writers. It was the original newspaper with consciousness of the independent indigenous population with the idea of saving their traditional culture and language. It was a weekly newspaper written in four languages: Lauravetlan (Chukchi), Yupik (Eskimo), Evens, and Russian. Unfortunately, now *Murgin Nutenut*, as I have mentioned, is a supplement to the Russian newspaper *Krainy Sever*, and the editorial staff has only one Native journalist. This supplement publishes material in the Chukchi and Evens languages twice a month. One day, it could become a newspaper run by indigenous people again. This would happen in a time not only of economic improvement, but especially at a time when the enthusiasm of Chukotka's indigenous peoples is high concerning their own ethnic identity.

Notes

[1]Lauravetlan is the self-designation of Chukchi; Chukchi is the official name given to them by Russian authorities.

[2]*Sovetskaya Chukotka* was a regional Russian newspaper with two or three articles in the Chukchi language (until 1953) and was issued by an organ of the regional committee of the Communist Party from October 28, 1933 until October 28, 1993. In the 1930s, the newspaper was issued five times a week with a circulation of approximately 2,000, which was 6,665 in 1965. In 1993, this newspaper was renamed *Krainy Sever*.

[3]The 1938 Resolution of Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviki) and Soviet Narodnykh Komissarov URSS: "Ob obyazatelnom obuchenii russkogo yazyka v shkolakh natcionalnykh respublik i oblastei." This resolution reduced the role of Native languages in the education system.

[4]1958 "Zakon o shkole." According to this Act, every Native school in Chukotka had to make Russian the language of instruction.

[5](1992). Chislennost' i sostav naseleniya narodov Severa (po dannym perepisi nasseleniya 1989). Tom 1, chast' 1, pp. 182-212, 326-332, 356. Respublikansky informatsionn-izdatelsky tsentr, Moskva.

[6]*Murgin Nutenut* had issued contributions in the Nuuk dialect of the Eskimo language. Most Yupik do not understand this dialect (MN February 9, 1991). Later it became a problem to issue the Eskimo page, and current MN issues are only in the Lauravetlan and Evens languages.

[7]*Sovetskaya Chukotka* was renamed *Krainy Sever* in 1993. The first issue appeared November 4, 1993, and circulation in 1999 was approximately 2,000.

[8]Chukotka regional radio broadcasts in three languages, Russian, Luravetlan, and Yupik, for 3 hours a day, which is 21 hours in a week and 1095 hours in a year. TV programs are broadcast in two languages, Lauravetlan and Russian, for 1 hour per day, which is 510 hours per year (KS, November 26, 1999).

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